

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 11 APRIL 2022
AT 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr D Lindsay, Deputy Chair of the Parish Council
Four members of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk
County Councillor van Mierlo
4 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 4 May 2021 were approved and signed.

Chairman of the Parish Council's Report

I apologise that I am unable to be present at this evening's meeting: having successfully eluded Covid for the last two years, it has finally caught up with me and is proving reluctant to leave.

I wish to start by paying tribute to my predecessor, Amanda Sheppard, who stood down from the role in May last year. She was a tireless chair, diligent, thorough, and thoughtful, focused always on serving the interests of the community. We are greatly in her debt.

There has been some "churn" among Councillors: Elizabeth Spencer stood down early last year, as did Caroline Pickett in the autumn. I thank both of them for their work and support: the village has benefitted greatly.

We were lucky enough to attract a number of highly suitable volunteers to fill the vacant roles: I'm delighted that Chris Groves, Jen Webster and Richard Sheehan have all joined the council and are making an impact with their work.

Over the course of the year we have addressed the usual flow of planning issues: most have been resolved in line with the views of the Parish Council. We also know that we are in something of a lull before the storm of the next Local Plan process which will no doubt re-surface the long-standing debates about the location of new developments.

The other bane of a Parish Council is usually dog litter: having been let down by a previous contractor whose service indeed turned out to be too good to be true, we appear to have been more fortunate in their replacement. I'm touching wood as I write this...

We were able to hold a very successful village event in the grounds of Haseley Court to celebrate a summer break in the pandemic restrictions: it felt simply joyous to gather together as a community for the first time in over a year, and our thanks to all who were involved in organising it, and to Sam and Poppy Swire for hosting us (and providing the Spitfire).

This year we will celebrate the Jubilee of HM The Queen – on the weekend itself, with a splendid party and fireworks; and for the longer term with a programme of tree planting on the Rec.

One of our priorities has been to return the Millennium Wood to its former glory: we have a plan, and bids are in for the funds to make it work. We are also planning to make the Parish Council Carbon Net Zero on its own estate, and to promote and support wider initiatives in line with county and Oxford targets.

One of the by-products of the development outside Thame is that the village has access to some significant funding for "Public Art". The Parish Council will be considering how best to generate the ideas for enhancing the village with work, or works, that are unique and resonant of our community.

Full fibre broadband inches its way towards us – in various different schemes. It seems baffling that something so obvious is nevertheless subject to at least three different public funding projects, which struggle to talk to each other. I am confident – just – that we will get a good outcome, but it should be simpler than it is.

We spent the first year of Covid meeting remotely – which turned out to be something of a benefit as it made wider attendance possible: but it has been good to be back meeting in person, and I am always grateful to those members of the public who come to the meetings, and hold us to account – either at the meetings themselves, or through correspondence or meetings with either me or my fellow Councillors.

One of the undoubted successes of the last couple of years has been the Haseley Updates emails: we are hugely indebted to Colin for continuing what started as a covid lifeline, and has become an essential piece of village communication. Colin has told us that we can't expect him to keep going for ever, so we will need a volunteer to take this on.

I'll end by thanking my fellow Councillors for their hard work and commitment to supporting our community. They are all volunteers, and give freely of their time.

And in particular, I would like to thank Andrea Oughton, our indefatigable Clerk. She makes light work of the administrative burdens that come with the job, keeps the chairman mostly on track (and where not on track, it is his, not her, fault); and unlike (as it turns out) other Parish Council Clerks, is always fully aware of the regulations, and keeps us within them with good humour and sound common sense.

Responsible Financial Officer's Report

The internal audit of the 2020-21 financial accounts was undertaken by Mr Dick Heinrich between 7th May and 5th June 2021 following the Scope of Work agreed by the Parish Council.

The internal audit concluded that the control objectives had been achieved throughout the financial year and the Income & Expenditure account and the Balance Sheet were a fair reflection of the financial position of the Council. The financial affairs of the Council were in good shape, with substantial reserves, made up mainly from Community Infrastructure Levy receipts set aside for agreed future projects.

The 2020-21 financial year again saw Income exceed the £25k threshold requiring the completion of Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return submitted to Moore, the Government appointed External Auditors, at the end of June 2021.

The External Auditor's Report concluded the information provided was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

There were no other matters affecting their opinion and a Certificate of a 'clean audit' was issued on 21 September 2021.

Total expenditure was £19,030, the main headings of which, as they have been over many years, were council administration, grass cutting, dog waste bin emptying, subscriptions and insurance. Other expenditure included contributions towards the refurbishment of Back Way, bulb planting and donations to charitable organisations including Citizen's Advice, the Maple Tree. The Parish Council continues to support the Village Hall with an annual grant and St Peter's Church with a contribution towards the cost of grass cutting.

Total income was £29,732 made up of the Precept (£16,000), the amount of income the Parish Council requests from the District Council to include in the Council Tax that you pay each year, Community Infrastructure Levy (£6,394) collected from new development, grant funds received from the County and District Councillors, allotment rents and other grants (£7059).

Finally, I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their support during the year and to Dick Heinrich for his continued support with the Internal Auditor.

County Councillor's Report

In May 2021, I was elected as your county councillor with 53% of the vote. It was part of a 'yellow wave' that saw Liberal Democrats become the equal largest party in the county, and also the equal largest party in the Henley constituency. A new administration was formed following the elections comprising of 21 Lib Dems, 3 Greens and 16 Labour councillors – the first non-Conservative administration in Oxfordshire County Council.

In the first year of taking control, the new administration has not wasted any time. We have developed new strategies for transport and HGVs, libraries & SEND. Instituted a new policy to meet our promise of delivering 20mph communities and secured grants following ambitious bids to central government to improve bus services. Youth services will be brought back for the first time since they were scrapped by the Tories. We have engaged closely in the Oxfordshire 2050 process to express our concerns on the projected growth targets being set and were a key driver of getting the ox-cam arc and expressway scrapped.

In February this year, the new administration's first budget was passed at Full Council. It is true that a rise in council tax comes at a time when the rising cost of living is hitting people hard. However, to continue to meet our obligations on social care – which makes up over half our budget – there was little choice. The Conservatives offered no amendments at the meeting. Having recently received my own council tax bill, I will pay it through gritted teeth, but knowing that the money is going to some of the most vulnerable residents in Oxfordshire.

As your local councilor, I serve one of the biggest divisions in the county – stretching from Nettlebed to Great Milton, and from Ewelme to Postcombe. Chalgrove village and Watlington town make up the largest settlements, but at my last count there are over 25 distinct villages and communities. I spend a lot of my time campaigning on issues important to Watlington and Chalgrove – as these also have a significant impact on the surrounding villages.

In Chalgrove, I continue to campaign against the airfield development. In August last year, I facilitated a meeting with the new Leader of the Council, Liz Leffman, and Martin-Baker, who currently use the site to test and develop ejector seats. In March 2022 I spoke against a reference to the airfield development at cabinet in papers prepared for HIF1 – a housing infrastructure project around Didcot.

In April, I brought a motion to Full Council to position the County as opposed to the development. It was voted down by a Con-Lab coalition, but I will continue to oppose in any way I can. In Watlington, two thorny issues have needed persistence to keep on track. The first is the new 'edge road' that will direct traffic away from the historic town center and the second is working to resolve a long-standing legal bind that has prevented a council-controlled property on the high street from being occupied for 12 years.

Across all villages and towns in the division I have championed local efforts to reduce traffic speeds and volumes. I'm pleased that many of the villages in this division have applied to have 20mph zones and have been successful in being part of the first tranche to implemented by OCC. I have used my priority fund to support the purchase of SID and VAS signs, and helped villages in accessing OCC matched funding to village gates and other traffic calming features.

As I look to the next 3 years, and the administration does too, we want to move from a position of firefighting and dealing with legacy issues, to making progress on our priorities. The way that planning works means some projects agreed by the Tories are locked into complicated processes that are difficult to unbind, but I hope that you as residents will see a shift over the next 3 years towards tackling the climate emergency and protecting biodiversity; taking on the inequalities in our county; improving social care and special educational needs provision; and investing in active and sustainable transport.

Not everything will be as popular as 20mph zones – I have had to have difficult conversations with local farmers about the change to plant-based meals at county meetings. No doubt when the Zero Emissions Zone in Oxford is expanded, and residents drive into Oxford for a fee, I will face more difficult questions.

Perhaps it is a dangerous thing post-Brexit to quote a former European Commission President, but I'm going to do it anyway. On climate change, Jean-Claude Juncker, said *"We all know what to do, but we don't know how to get re-elected once we have done it."*

On a personal note, I've very much enjoyed my first year as a councillor. It hasn't been easy, and there is a reason why most councillors are not of working age. It is very hard to make being a councillor compatible with full time or near full time work – but I live life by the motto, *if you want something doing well, give it to a busy person.*

The reason I ran was to be part of a thriving and welcoming community – and to serve them as best I could. On this metric, I couldn't have asked for a better first year.

Cllr Lindsay thanked Cllr van Mierlo for allocating £1,200 of funding from his County Councillor Grant to help towards the refurbishment of names on the war memorial.

District Councillor's Report

District Councillor Newton had sent her apologies.

Reports from Organisations in the Parish

Great Haseley Cricket Club (Chris Groves)

Summary of Season 2021:

32 Matches Scheduled, 20 Completed – Great Haseley Cricket Club (2), Tiddington IIIs (7), Tiddington U15s (2), Thame Cricket Club IIIs (1), Holton (8).

Developments:

Tiddington CC removed rubbish from behind Pavillion

Shipping container relocated from Tiddington CC to back of the pavilion for equipment storage (ride on Roller)

Container house deconstructed roll-on covers which when remade will be used to aid wicket preparation

Outlook:

Develop a stronger connection with Tiddington CC.

Long term "lease" (5 years) could provide access to funding for pavilion improvements and installation of astroturf practice wicket.

2022 Season:

The creation of a 4th League cricket team at Tiddington CC, bridging the gap between youth and senior cricket, will ensure there is a cricket match at Haseley Rec every Saturday in 2022.

Fixtures:

Great Haseley CC:	Date	Opposition
	1 May	Top Knockers
	15 May	Headington Quarry
	12 June	Gussets
	29 June	Bodliean
	3 July	Tappers

Tiddington CC III	9 Saturday League Fixtures
Tiddington CC IV	9 Saturday League Fixtures
Tiddington CC U15s	4 Monday Evening Fixtures
Tiddington CC U15 Girls	4 Tuesday Evening Fixtures
Great Haseley CC	5 Confirmed Sunday Fixtures
Holton CC	10 Sunday Fixtures

A full list of fixtures will be posted at the pavilion and village hall.

Great Haseley History Group (Jane Simcox)

Jane had given her apologies and submitted the following report.

The History Group has now completed the task of transcribing the gravestones at St Peter's and at Rycote. However, the mapping of the stones is taking some time and it is hoped at this will be completed this year.

We sadly lost one of our stalwarts, John Andrews, and his research skills are much missed.

There is little else to report except that new artefacts etc have been donated to the group which have now mostly been catalogued. We are looking for a new project to start, so if anyone has any ideas about what we should undertake next, please contact me.

Great Haseley & District Horticultural Society (Louise Bird)

The horticultural Society had a quiet year. Due to the pandemic it wasn't possible to commit to holding a show and to hold our usual round of winter talks.

However, looking forward, we are planning a full show this year on the August bank holiday Saturday with the exciting venue to be announced shortly. Our first event will be the AGM on May 24th followed by a talk on "Topical tips for the season", and we are also planning a series of autumn talks and a winter party. We look forward to seeing you all over the coming year as the Society comes back to life.

Playing Fields (Chris Groves)

In the last year the playing fields / pavilion has hosted a wedding and an 18th birthday party and 20 cricket matches. Daffodils have been planted around the trees and match goal posts purchased. A wedding is planned for 14th May 2022 and 40+ cricket matches are scheduled.

St Peter's Church

No report.

Great Haseley Sports Club (GHSC Committee (Lucy, Victoria, Emily & Jo).

There are some new faces on the GHSC Committee following the AGM last June and the new Committee now has four members - Lucy Foster, Victoria Nixey, Emily Gresty and Jo Shrimpton. The new Committee took over at the start of the year and we would like to thank Charlotte, Fiona, Mel and Viki for everything they have done for the GHSC over the past 10 years. If anyone else might be interested in joining the Committee please do let me know.

The courts are just over 20 years old but due to ongoing maintenance are still in good condition. This winter we have done several treatments with moss killer to remove the moss at the end of the courts closest to the wood.

As mentioned last year the tennis nets and posts are very worn so we have ordered replacements which we hope to be in place in the next few weeks. We have also replaced the missing nuts and bolts on the court netting surrounding the courts.

Membership fees were reduced for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons due to the Covid lockdowns. With the reduced fees we had an increased number of members so we have decided to keep the membership fees at the reduced rates for the forthcoming year 2022-23 as well. There has already been a significant amount of interest.

Tennis coaching commenced once more on 27th March 2022 with Neil James - our long-standing coach - delivering 18 weeks of lessons on Sunday mornings. There are 30 children having lessons every Sunday followed by a lesson for adults.

As a new initiative, if members are interested, we are also compiling a list of adult members who would be interested in playing matches (friendly or competitive) against other members. This is on an informal basis with members contacting each other to arrange a game. Do let me know if you would might be interested.

Village Hall (Suzi Morgan)

The last year has been noticeably quiet in terms of bookings due to Covid – but it is now starting to improve, and we now have one regular weekly booking again for fitness classes and local mummies are booking fairly regularly for toddler parties.

We organised an extraordinarily successful Garden Party at Haseley Court in the summer of 2021. This provided a wonderful venue for residents of the village to meet up and explore the beautiful gardens. We organised live music and refreshments; the owner arranged a spitfire ‘fly past’ which was the highlight of the afternoon.

The hall has also been used by the community for ‘pop up pub’ nights – this provides a wonderful opportunity for residents to congregate and socialise, now we no longer have a pub in the village. This has been successful but quite an onerous task every month for the committee, so we are hoping to create a rota of volunteers to run this occasionally if it is to continue long term.

We do have concerns about the outgoings - the dramatic increase in energy costs is a concern to the committee as we have already been paying c.£800 per annum for electric prior to these increases. We will need to increase rental costs to help cover this outgoing. The insurance on the hall is just under £1,000 and since covid we have upgraded the cleaning which is obviously necessary and moving forwards is costing c.£1,400 per annum.

To reduce our outgoings and improve the building our chair is currently obtaining quotes to install insulation, new heating system and replacement of doors/windows to make the building more energy efficient. This will be crucial for the long-term use of the building in the future. We will be aiming for grants to cover most of these costs.

We hope once this work is complete the hall will see an increase in income and use, and a more comfortable space in winter, with the advantage of a decrease in our energy costs.

Cash held in bank: Deposit Account £15,649.58, Current Account: £6,063.71

Open Forum – Questions from Electors / Public Discussion

A resident requested the Parish Council consider the installation of a pair of mirrors opposite the opening to Lewington Close to enable drivers to see approaching traffic. The wall of the Old Post Office completely blocks the view of traffic coming from the Great Milton direction and there have been several occasions when a collision has been narrowly avoided.

The Chairman replied that the Parish Council did not have the power to install mirrors, this lay with the Highways Department at Oxfordshire County Council. It was also noted there is a danger to pedestrians too as this is on a popular route back to the village from the park. It was agreed to review again 6 months after the installation of the new 20mph speed limit and that the Clerk will write to OCC Highways.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.55pm

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Chairman
10 April 2023